

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-20

WASHINGTON POST
27 March 1984

Officials' Limousines Encounter

By Howard Kurtz and Pete Earley
Washington Post Staff Writers

Attorney General William French Smith's repayment of \$11,000 for his wife's use of a government limousine puts him at the top of a growing list of senior Reagan administration officials who have run into problems with one of the government's favorite perks.

Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger and Treasury Secretary Donald T. Regan are among those who have allowed their spouses to use government cars for such personal reasons as trips to restaurants, museums, luncheons, art galleries and social events.

Cabinet officers are among the 190 federal officials who received door-to-door chauffeur service to their homes in 1982 at a cost of \$3.4 million, according to a survey by Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.), a frequent critic of the practice. Hundreds of other officials can call on their agency's carpool for official trips, but not for commuting.

"It's a real status symbol when an official comes into his neighborhood with a chauffeur and gets out of his car," Proxmire has said. "When we try to take the limousine away, they just buck like steers. I think they'd rather lose a billion-dollar program than a limousine."

In addition to Smith, whose repayment was disclosed yesterday, these officials have been criticized for questionable use of government cars:

- Regan's wife, Ann, has used a government car on 75 occasions over a 20-month period, mostly for personal reasons.

According to government records, Ann Regan's regular driver, James Tippet, has picked her up at her Virginia home or the Treasury Building and taken her to such places as the F Street Club, Kennedy Center, Smithsonian Institu-

Potholes

tion, Corcoran Gallery, Woodrow Wilson House, Dumbarton House, Sulgrave Club, National Airport and the Washington Hilton, Shoreham and Mayflower hotels. On one afternoon, the records show, the driver was instructed to wait while Ann Regan finished lunch at Maison Blanche.

A Treasury Department spokesman said yesterday he did not know whether Regan had repaid the government for his wife's use of the car.

- Weinberger last year repaid \$205 after the Federal Times dis-

closed that his wife and other family members made 20 trips in Pentagon cars over a six-month period to visit libraries, tourist attractions and, in one case, a beauty parlor. Eleven other defense officials had to repay \$386, including one official who had a government car dispatched to pick up his babysitter.

- Donald L. Hovde, while undersecretary of the Housing and Urban Development Department, repaid \$3,100 for improperly using a government car and driver to commute from his McLean home and for personal errands.

Hovde's car and driver were used to take his wife downtown, his neighbors to the Kennedy Center, his daughter to school and his parents on a sightseeing trip to the Capitol. Hovde, now a member of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, also used the Buick LeSabre to attend a wedding, pick up a suit, visit his car dealer, pick up laundry and dine at private homes and restaurants.

- Nancy Harvey Steorts, chairman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, used a government driver to take her on at least five trips to the hairdresser, deposit

money in her bank, pick up dresses and draperies at downtown stores and drive her daughter to the White House to visit friends, according to the driver, Michael A. Hager, who no longer works for Steorts. Hager said that friends also chipped in to buy him a suit after Steorts ordered him to get a chauffeur's uniform and hat or risk being fired. Steorts declined to comment at the time.

- Former Veterans Administration head Robert P. Nimmo repaid \$6,441 for using his chauffeur to drive him to and from his Virginia home. He also agreed to terminate a \$708-a-month lease for a 1982 Buick Electra that he had requested in place of the compact cars provided for most agency heads. The controversy helped lead to Nimmo's resignation in 1982.

The busiest car, according to Proxmire's 1982 survey, was used by CIA Director William J. Casey, whose driver got \$26,000 in overtime pay on top of his \$20,000 salary.